

Exhibit No. 6Date 1-23-09Bill No. SB 119

My name is Shyla Patera. I work at North Central Independent Living Services in Black Eagle, Montana. As a professional Independent Living Specialist, a disabilities advocate and a citizen, I write to support SB 119-Medicaid Buy in Option for workers with disabilities sponsored by Senator Esp. I am hoping to testify before the committee in person on Friday at 3PM, but just in case the weather turns nasty, I wanted to share my thoughts.

I live work and am a part of the most dynamic community in Montana and in America. Citizens with disabilities want to live, work and play to the maximum extent possible. Yet, many of us experience a quandary when it comes to work. How do we work and let our talents shine while at the same time keeping the benefits which pay for the supports we need that will allow us to accomplish our goals? Often Medicaid is the only insurance that will pay for PCA or Personal Assistance Services medications and other supports

I have dealt with advocates concerns ,both professionally and personally. As apart of the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Outreach, I interviewed citizens with disabilities in north central Montana who told me that they wanted to work, but were scared to lose Medicaid. The struggle to find work and keep benefits is intensely personal and many citizens told me of their fears and hopes while searching for work. They wanted to educate employers and communities, about talent and employment but they were wise and hoped to work through the gaps in healthcare to secure employment.

My personal journey mirrors that of others. After obtaining a Bachelor of Arts from MSU in 1993, I worked at a series of part time and national service positions and jobs to maintain benefits. I looked for full time work. I often was not the best candidate. I wonder now whether or not paying for my health care was a deciding factor for employers. Even, today at North Central independent Living Services, I still have to struggle with this. I must remain eligible for Medicaid and have turned down raises in order to remain eligible so that I may meet asset tests. My employer offers private insurance with a high deductible and the insurance does not cover a personal assistant. I want to focus on my talents , abilities, work and communities that I serve. I hope the Medicaid Buy in becomes reality!!

Shyla Patera NCILS